



Critical perspectives on accreditation of informal learning in highly regulated and differentiated VET-systems

Case study



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In highly regulated and differentiated VET –systems - as an example- the German dual system- the accreditation of informal learning is unusual because it endangers the VET-system. In fact professional qualifications connected with an apprenticeship exam are devalued if the same qualification can be achieved through the accreditation of skills and competences which were achieved in an informal context.

Especially the social partners take care that the accreditation of informal learning is reduced to a minimum in order to protect those who have gained their qualifications through an apprenticeship. Therefore non formal and informal learning is no alternative to an apprenticeship in the dual system and a separate accreditation of non-formal and informal learning only becomes relevant in CVT.

One exception though is the German “Externenprüfung” (“External Examination”). Long time professional experience is essential for this final examination which is carried through according to the rules for every apprentice in the dual system.

Nevertheless the accreditation of informal learning is practised in professional fields related to training for leisure time activities like horse riding, tennis, golf or sailing. In these sections the accreditation of informal learning is often the more common way of qualifying oneself for the profession although there are opportunities to complete a regular apprenticeship in some of the fields. While the apprenticeship is accredited through a state-run examination board the skills and competencies which were achieved in an informal context are accredited by sports associations.

On the labour market the value of the different qualifications can not be judged generally but regarding e.g. the case of riding teachers it can be stated that they are mostly of equal value.

So it is the case that riding teachers on the labour market usually have either the background of a regular apprenticeship for professional training horse and horse riding (horse landlord) or achieved a training license (Trainer B or C) for training and organizing in the horse riding sport.

The comparison between the horse landlord with the main emphasis on professional training horses and teaching horse riding and the Trainer C training and organizing in the horse riding sport with the main emphasis teaching horse riding will demonstrate good practice and recognition procedures for informally accredited skills and competencies in Germany.

1. Formally accredited skills and competencies in the field of professional horse riding

Due to the dual system an apprentice for training horses and teaching horse riding needs to go through a 3 year turn of VET within the field of the horse landlord.

It is possible though to shorten the time of the apprenticeship when prior learning and qualifications are taken into account as for example one year basic occupational training in agrarian economics with the main emphasis animals or plants (1979 BGBl. I S. 1142) or one year of subject related vocational school (Berufsfachschule) which prepares for one of the main emphasises of the horse landlord. (§ 3 Abs. 1 Berufsgrundbildungsjahr-Anrechnungs-Verordnung Landwirtschaft).

The horse landlord takes care of horses (feeding, watering, combing and moving), cleans out the stable and does pastoral care, organizes and prepares feed, prepares and performs the transportation of horses, maintains equipment and other materials for one's work and manages the administration. Depending on the main emphasis of the horse landlord the apprentice also trains and disciplines horses and does take achievement tests.

The apprenticeship for the horse landlord offers 4 main emphasises from which the apprentice can choose:

- discipline and owning of horses
- horse riding
- horse racing
- trotting race

1.2 Horse riding conditions

It is indispensable that the apprentice is not only sportive but skilful and untiring. Additional to these characteristics the apprentice also has to have thorough knowledge about horse riding and at least the badge “Reitabzeichen Kl. 3” that proves his excellent abilities and knowledge in horse caring, horse behaviour and horse riding. Being able to start the apprenticeship for professional training horses and horse riding the applicant needs to have at least a couple of years practise with horse riding and have spent lots of effort to achieve the hierarchy of badges to gain badge “Reitabzeichen KL. 3”. An apprentice with little knowledge of horse riding cannot achieve an apprenticeship within three years. It is therefore substantial that the apprentice needs to achieve his/her skills and abilities informally in sports clubs and/or other horse riding sports facilities.

The fact that the apprentice needs to have informally achieved thorough knowledge and experience before starting the apprenticeship differs with the usual access to any other VET in the dual system.

The horse landlord with the main emphasis on training horses and teaching horse riding has two areas of responsibility. The first area of responsibility focuses on preparing young horses for horse riding, shows and competitions. The second area of responsibility focuses on training and educating children and (young) adults further.

1.3 VET of horse landlords in the Dual System

The horse landlord is one of the approximately 360 nationwide recognized training occupations. The vocational education and training act for the landlord was established in 1975 and is worked on and expected to be changed in 2006 by the social partners.

Every year almost 70 % (?????) of all apprentices with the occupation horse landlord pass the Final examination. Almost 80 % of all apprentices are female. Nearly 50% of all apprentices have completed the intermediate school (“Realschule”)- even though the official vocational educational training regulation does not mention the need of a specific school education or prior learning experience)- and are 18 years old or older (the official regulation for vocational educational training does also not mentioned how old an apprentice should to be).

It is expected that the apprentice loves animals and shows lots of effort and engagement in his work. Since it is not possible to invest only 8-hours shifts when working with animals the apprentice needs to accept irregular working hours and to work at night as well as on weekends.

The dual VET-system combines on-the-job training or in-company training with “Part-time Vocational School” (Berufsschule). The apprenticeship can only be carried through with a company that holds a state certificate for the apprenticeship (riding schools, stud stable, horse stable, running or training stable). Since not all companies are able to offer all needed subjects

for examination the apprentice has to complete some of the acquired subjects in another company or in more than one firm.

During the first two years of the apprenticeship the apprentice can change the main emphasis but has to make his/her decision before the beginning of the third year of VET. The apprentice has to take the intermediate exam in his/her main emphasis and therefore has to decide by the end of the second VET-year which main emphasis he/she will choose.

The skills and knowledge to be acquired in the course of training at the workplace are set out in the Ausbildungsordnung (training regulations) and broken down in terms of content and time in a framework training plan, the particulars of which are specified by the training company in an individual training plan.

The vocational education and training regulation for the horse landlord from 1975 lists the following skills and competencies the apprentice will have to master on-the-job training or in-company training:

- feeding, taking care of, leading and transporting horses
- physique build, life processes and habits of horses
- health and hygiene of horses
- moving and working of horses
- reproduction, breeding, passing on and study of race of horses
- fodder, producing, procuring and use of fodder for horses
- different ways to keep horses as well as construction and technical fitting out
- use, taking care and maintenance of machines, equipment and attachments
- knowledge of in-company processes of the training company
- knowledge of law study concerning horses
- knowledge of economic and social study
- protection during work and how to avoid accidents
- environmental protection

During the entire VET the apprentice attends the Part-time Vocational School (Berufsschule) or is educated in weekly periods. Classes in the Part-time Vocational School cover the material for each recognised occupation requiring formal training as set out in the training regulations in line with the Rahmenlehrplan (framework curriculum).

The following skills and competencies are supposed to be imparted by the Berufsschule and in special subject related courses:

- basic knowledge of horses
- knowledge of construction and technical equipment of the in-company processes and intern company connections of the training company
- economic standards, industrial law

The theoretical VET also considers the study of feeding, organization of the company, mathematics and general knowledge e.g. the study of economic and social connections.

The Final examination is carried through written, practically, orally and with the all subjects taught on-the-job training or in-company training as well as the subjects taught in the Part-time Vocational School or subject related courses.

The main emphasis of the apprentice in the field of horse landlord will determine the main focus of the Final examination. If the apprentice completes the apprenticeship horse landlord with the main emphasis horse riding successfully he/she is officially allowed to call himself/herself “horse landlord” (“Pferdewirt/Pferdewirtin”) and is additionally accredited by the German Equestrian Federation (Deutsche Reiterliche Vereinigung- FN) as an expert for training horses and teaching horse riding.

After completing three years of working as a horse landlord it is possible to achieve the master within the main emphasis of the horse landlord. It is only then possible to open up a riding school or an institution for leisure time activities.

Nevertheless the horse landlord has many options to specialize within the field of CVT or further education e.g. as a teacher for handicapped people, care taker for horses, master of studs, master in the administration of stables, expert for the performance of exercises on horsebacks etc.

Informally accredited skills and competencies in Germany- horse riding sport as an example

Due to the horse landlord there is an amateur system that qualifies for training and organizing in the horse riding sport even though the training part for horse riding it is rather qualifying for horse riding practise hours than professionally training horse and teaching horse rider as the horse landlord does.

Someone who wishes to qualify for training and organizing in the horse riding sport needs to prove his informally gained competencies and skills before he/she can start the training for Trainer B/C. Accomplishing the Trainer B/C with the main emphasis on teaching horse riding opens up the opportunity on the labour market to train and teach horses as well as children and (young) adults in basic practise horse riding, practise hours for competitive sport and competition.

Even though only the horse landlord is supposed to train and teach horses and horse riders Trainer B/C usually has equal opportunities working as a trainer for professional horse riding, too. Basically every person who has qualified for Trainer B/C can call himself horse riding teacher (Reitlehrer) since the professional name of a horse riding teacher is not secured by the state as for example for the “cook”.

Since Trainer B and Trainer C are very similar in their qualifications with the only exception that Trainer B refers more theoretically to the training and organizing in the horse riding sport, Trainer C was chosen to demonstrate the comparability to the horse landlord. Furthermore more people choose to qualify as Trainer B or C than through the regular apprenticeship (Landesbericht ?Angabe wie viele mehr und Quelle !!!).

1. Training and examination regulation for Trainer C in basic horse riding

The training and examination regulation (“APO”- Ausbildungs- und Prüfungsordnung) of the German Equestrian Federation (Deutsche Reiterliche Vereinigung e.V.) for the staff in charge of training and organizing in the horse riding sport are accompanied by leaflets telling how to handle the courses with subjects and examinations.

The training for “Trainer C- Riding/Basic sport” offers different main emphasises to choose from (source: APO-Part E, June 2006):

- Horse riding
- Western riding
- Driving?
- Perform exercises on horseback
- School sport

Before it is possible to start the training for the trainer C though, a special preparation course has to be accomplished. This preparation course lasts one day and checks the skills and competencies of the trainee in horse riding to make sure that the trainee is capable to achieve the license of Trainer C.

It is not possible to qualify for this preparation course if the trainee has no or little experience in horse riding. The trainee needs at least 3 to 4 years of horse riding practise, horse caring experience and has to have accomplished all the horse sport badges (.....) to qualify for the preparation course and the following training to accomplish the license of Trainer C.

Subject related schools or companies for training horse riding offer this special preparation course as well as the vocational training for Trainer C. If the trainee chooses to take the preparation course for the Trainer C in another subject related school or company for training horse riding he/she needs a recommendation letter with his listed skills and competencies.

The head of the preparation course then decides whether or not the trainee can start the training for the license of Trainer C.

The preparation course will also inform the trainee about job opportunities and how to avoid deficits in skills and knowledge. The trainee needs to be at least 15 years old and can only start the training at age 16 when successfully qualified for trainer assistant. The training assistant is supposed to help trainers and with the help and instructions given to also lead groups.

It is not possible to accredit this preparation course for the training period to become Trainer C.

With the licence Trainer C the trainer qualifies for the following competences:

- to know the horse riding sport and competition sport, analyse it and argue for it
- basic knowledge for the training of the horse and the horse rider, horse driver and person who performs exercises on horsebacks
- imparting the subjects of the training socially competent for offers concerning the basic horse riding sport and competition sport
- to make sure horse and horse rider keep their track on training, driving or performs exercises on horsebacks
- to make sure that skills and competences follow the training goal
- if the trainee wishes to open up a school on his/her own it is recommended to obtain Trainer C license for school sport

Access (§ 4300)

1. The application for access to the training and examination needs to be fulfilled by the applicant according to the regulation for training and examination (APO § 40303 Abs. 1 about payment, examination board and staff in training).
2. The following conditions need to be fulfilled for access to examination:
 - a) Membership in a horse sport association belonging to the German Equestrian Federation (Deutsche Reiterlichen Vereinigung e.V.) or/and member associations
 - b) Age 18 (or 16 if the applicant completed successfully the training for Training assistant and got a recommendation from the head of the training and the examination board as well as completed the German Equestrian Federation badge III (DRA III).
 - c) Good manners and behaviour as well as an certificate that the holder has no criminal record
 - d) DRA IV (German Horse Riding badge IV) or comparable badges of member sport associations and the horse riding passport or western riding badge WRA III (Western Reitabzeichen Bronze)
 - e) DLA IV (German Horse Riding badge IV)

- f) First Aid license that is not older than two years
 - g) Preparation course comparable (chapter E1.h”of APO) and participation in a three week training to prepare for the final examination with at least 120 hours (45 minutes); it is allowed to fulfil this preparation course during the week and week evenings, weekends and during daily courses but with the overall duration of 18 days (examination inclusive) and only a short period to the examination date.
3. The organizer of the training has to inform the state commission for riding (LK-Landeskommission) the latest three days after the training has started about the admission for examination
 4. The state commission and head of training decide whether the application for the training and for the examination can be accepted. The access to the training can be denied even during the preparation course if it becomes obvious that the applicant will not be able to pass the examination.

Contents of training (source: APO§ 4301 Part E, June 2006)

1. Riding practise
2. Teaching riding (how to sit properly etc.)
3. Pedagogy of sport (Basic knowledge how to move etc.)
4. Riding theory (according to riding and driving, book 1 and 2)
5. Basic knowledge in sports (general youth work, personal and social communicative competence etc.)
6. Basic knowledge about sports (organisation of Riding, environment, security, first aid etc.)

Final Examination, Contents, Fees and Failing (source: APO§ 4302/ 4303/4304/4305 Part E, June 2006)

Curriculum, contents of examination and procedure are mentioned in a special leaflet.

The contents of the training of § 4301 are part of the examination and marked for the report. As well as for the curriculum the trainee has to pay a fee for the examination (about 600 EUR). If the trainee is marked with “incomplete ” or two times with “not well done” he/she has failed the examination. If the trainee has failed he/she gets a second chance. Parts of the examination can only be examined one more time within 2 years otherwise the trainee has to go through all again.

Commission for Examination (§4304)

1. The examination has to be passed in front of a State Commission for Examination of Horse Performances (Landeskommission für Pferdeleistungsprüfungen/LK) and the German Equestrian Federation (Deutsche Reiterliche Vereinigung e.V./FN)
2. Part of the commission are
 - a chairperson of the German Equestrian Federation
 - a chairperson of a State Commission for Examination of Horse Performances
 - a chairperson of a state association
3. If all examiners vote equal the chairperson of the German Equestrian Federation decides
4. The committee of the commission and the examinee decide if observers are allowed.

Report and Qualification (§ 4308)

1. If the examination was passed the German Equestrian Federation (FN) writes a report and allows to use the title “Trainer C- Riding/Basic sport” as well as “Riding-Leader” (Berittführer).
2. The License for Trainer C can be awarded by the German Sports Federation (DSB). Its value is determined by the regulations of the German Sports Federation and their further education requirements.
3. Furthermore it is possible to be awarded by the German Equestrian Federation (FN) with an international pass for Trainers.

CONCLUSIONS

The equestrian sport is growing steadily in its popularity. It is this popularity that leads to the fact that more and more people own horses and get involved in the horse riding sport. With the growing number of horses, races and tournaments there is also a growing number of club engagement and the demand for staff in the horse riding sport.

This could be one explanation why the qualification of Trainer B/C is practised of basically equal value on the labour market with the horse landlord who went through the regular apprenticeship.

Another explanation could be that either the horse landlord as well as Trainer C need to have at least a couple of years of experience in horse riding within a system of experienced and professional horse riding before starting their careers.

Furthermore the professional horse landlord has to be paid according to his professional background due to the dual system whereas the salary of the Trainer B/C can more easily be negotiated.

As the expert for the horse riding sport Mr. Arnold (interview 12th of September) states:

Ändern! “horse riding practise and experience with horses as well as your own personal growing in handling all the different characters of horses to be trained is a huge challenge that cannot just be learned by yourself. If a system for horse riding is missing to bring the needed qualifications across it is not possible to qualify for professional horse riding”.

Selected Web Sites

Federal Ministry of Education and Research	http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/150_base/en/init/ger_3.htm
Vocational School Plön	http://www.kbs-ploen.de/index2.html
Hubertus Ott Western Riding “How to find Harmony with your horse”	http://www.ott-how.de/index.html
German Equestrian Federation	http://www.fn-dokr.de/isy.net/servlet/broadcast/ausbildung_beruf_merkblatt.html
German Sports Federation	http://www.dsb.de
German Sports Federation	http://www.dsb.de
Dietbert Arnold-Expert for equestrian sports	http://www.pferdwirtpruefung.de